



# Beyond Support

*Compilation of texts on the Locke St events and the charges laid in connection with them*

**Against Prisons  
& Their World**  
*In Solidarity with Prisoners  
at Barton Jail and Everywhere*

*Shared with the goal of encouraging discussion about gentrification and repression*

*And of building long-term solidarity with the defendants*

MAKE RACISTS AFRAID  
MAKE MISOGYNISTS AFRAID

*All texts reproduced below were pulled from North Shore  
Counter Info (north-shore.info)*

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**For updates on the Locke St defendants as well as for  
news on support and solidarity, check out Hamilton  
Anarchist Support at :**

**[hamiltonanarchistsupport.noblogs.org](http://hamiltonanarchistsupport.noblogs.org)**

All the dramatics from Locke St show that they expected not only to make money pursuing their self-interest and ignoring its impacts on others, they expected to also be loved for it. We aren't "shocked and horrified" by being attacked because we never expected the powerful and their bootlickers in this city to thank us for opposing them.

We know it's not boutiques that are the main driver of gentrification and the suffering it brings; it's real estate investment, speculation, and the municipal policies that encourage them. Small business are often visible and vocal in cheerleading, but aren't the ones redeveloping whole blocks or carrying out mass evictions. What they have done, though, is to put themselves on the side of the speculators and landlords, positioning themselves to profit off forces that harm most of their neighbours. We've chosen to critique and oppose them in the past because of their alliance with the rich and the big capitalists, and though they're not most responsible, their actions do have real consequences.

To be clear, we won't be filing police reports over this, but rather dealing with it autonomously and drawing on networks of mutual aid. The Tower will continue hosting the kinds of events and groups it always has, putting resources in common and sharing ideas. The events of the past few days change nothing about our project or our politics and we call on everyone with whom we've shared moments of struggle in the past to take some deep breaths and realize that although things are more intense right now, nothing has really changed.

## **Beyond Support: Update on Locke St Defendants and a Proposal for Beginning to Organize Solidarity**

Before giving updates on the Locke St defendants, it's worth taking a moment to put things in their context and to remember that these seven people are accused of participating in a struggle against gentrification in the city. This struggle has taken countless different forms over the years, from mass meetings, to stickers and posters, to broad-based organizing, to counter-demonstrations and pressure campaigns. The reason so many people have chosen to dedicate their energy to this issue for so long is that it's one of vital importance -- people are losing their homes at an ever-increasing rate as housing is treated more as a commodity or investment than as a basic need that everyone deserves to have met.

The broad, vague charges brought against these defendants are a way of silencing the increasingly urgent voices speaking and acting out against this attack on our ability to live in this city with dignity. The message of the police and legal system here is that there is no circumstance in which our deteriorating living conditions would ever justify any threat to property. And yet for over a decade developers, speculators, and their boosters have been easily able to ignore all opposition behind a wall of feel-good platitudes about renewal and culture. To now approach the struggle against gentrification as simply a matter of crime is an attempt to strip it of its content, concealing the larger struggle between the class that profits from rising housing prices and those who are displaced.

When dealing with the hugely disproportionate violence of the state, it can be easy for us to lose track of these larger issues. Yes, we're opposed to all forms of political repression, and we also don't see that repression as separate from all the ways the police and government protect those who benefit from gentrification (business owners, landlords, investors) at the expense of those who don't. Yes, we will support these defendants in beating their charges and

getting through the incarceration and bail conditions they will have to endure in the meantime, but we will also keep finding ways to act against the dominant interests in this city. We can't let ourselves be so swallowed by the support work that we give the rich a break.

We would like to encourage you to bring people together in your town to talk about issues of repression and gentrification, to talk about the details of this case and how it's relevant to you elsewhere in the territory controlled by the Canadian state, and to clarify your basis of support for those accused. This might be a useful step in preparing to act in solidarity over the long term as these charges drag on.

To help with get discussions going, we've compiled this hastily laid-out zine of various texts that have circulated about the Locke St actions and these charges so far. And if you do decide to organize an event and if it's public, consider posting on North Shore Counter Info's events listing so others can find out about it.

Regardless of innocence or guilt, solidarity with the Locke St defendants and let's keep pushing back against the power of capitalists.

## **Letter from Cedar On Conspiracy Charges, the Barton Jail, and Solidarity**

I've been out of jail about two weeks now, enough time to get set back up with a computer to replace the one stolen by the police and to begin sorting out what reflections I'd like to share more widely. I wrote a public letter while in the Barton Jail about a month ago and tried to mail it out, but it seems it didn't survive the prison censors, so a few details will be less timely than they might have been.

First of all, thanks so much for all the gestures of support and solidarity. Dealing with charges and incarceration is hard, but it makes a huge difference

## **The Tower's Statement on Recent Events**

We've held off on making any public statements so far because it's really not our desire to have conversations on the internet, such a toxic and alienating place. But having had our space attacked twice in the last couple of days, we feel like it's important to share a few reflections and be clear about where we stand.

First, no, the actions on Locke and Aberdeen on Saturday night were not organized by the Tower, but yes, we support what happened and are in solidarity with those who carried them out. Class war is happening every day in this city, with constant attacks on poor and working people. It's disappointing that so many only care about the occasional moment when a bit of anger flows back the other way. The ongoing effects of gentrification in this city are heartbreaking – waves of displacement, growing violence, and intensifying poverty. You cannot expect for all of this to just be swept under the proverbial rug. We have zero tears to shed for Locke st.

We feel that a single family being evicted is far worse than everything that happened on Locke St, even if you believe that running luxury businesses is a neutral act. And the level of outrage is particularly despicable considering that there have been two random stabbings of women in the last few days as well. It's beyond disgusting to see conversations about artisan donuts being prioritized over conversations about violence against women.

This isn't just whataboutism, this is us picking sides. When shit goes down, we aren't on the side of the rich and business class. We're in solidarity with everyone who resists the dominant powers in this city and we make any tactical criticisms we have privately. We oppose all repression and all collaboration with the police.

We've received several specific threats from far-right groups in the last few days foreshadowing the attacks on our space. Unsurprisingly, the local business class and the white supremacists who organized anti-immigrant demos in the city last year have found themselves on the same side.

1 I'm using the word riot here even though people of all stripes will probably object. I'm describing 30ish people who met in a park in an affluent neighbourhood, beat back the police, and blasted music on the streets while smashing windows and hurling eggs in plain view of bystanders. If it wasn't a proper riot, it was at least riotous, so I'll use that word for convenience.

2 Unearned privileges, not in the sense that you don't bust your ass for your paycheck, unearned in the sense that capitalism doesn't afford everyone the same rewards as you for the same amount of work. Not unearned in the sense that nothing hard has ever happened to you, but in the sense that the opportunities and chances afforded to you are rooted in long histories of patriarchy, colonization, racism, etc.

3 e.g. the kind of morality that suppresses very real tensions in society with politeness, that uses the language of "equality" and "respect" to disguise gross imbalances of power, and that understands legitimate social action to be anything that doesn't rock the boat.

to know that people have your back and understand these attacks by the state in the context of larger struggles for freedom and autonomy. As anarchists, we have a long history of facing repression bravely, and when I feel sad or scared, I think of the toothless grin of Bakunin in Siberia, or the defiant tilt of Louise Michel's chin as she confronted her judges, or the countless others since those days who have refused to let the violence of the state force them to abandon their ideas and integrity.

I'm not going to comment on the details of what I'm accused of, other than to say I stand by every word that we wrote in The Tower's statement back in early March. I do, however, think it's important to discuss the primary charge that is being used against me, Conspiracy to Commit Unlawful Assembly While Masked.

This crime was invented by the Harper government back in 2013, following a private member's bill from Blake Richards of Wild Rose. This appears to be the first time this law has been used. The charge of Unlawful Assembly While Masked is a huge escalation in the legal arsenal against people who participate in demonstrations, since it no longer simply criminalizes a person for their acts, but targets an entire group of people for all the acts carried out by people perceived to be part of that group.

There were existing mask laws dealing with committing an offense while masked, and those are bullshit too (and solidarity to the two people who were charged under that law during an antifascist demo in Quebec city this past fall and to P charged with masked with intent in Toronto). However, this new law goes further and allows the state to seek up to ten years in jail for anyone wearing a mask in a demonstration that is deemed "unlawful", a term that refers to a "reasonable fear" that an offense might be committed in the demonstration.

This is essentially the argument that was used against the original J20 defendants in the States this winter, after over 200 people were charged following a mass arrest at the Trump inauguration. They were accused of participating in a conspiracy by virtue of wearing a mask and showing up at the

same time and place. However, they were found not guilty of these charges and the state then dropped them against 129 other defendants, because the judge ruled that being present and masked in a protest does not make you responsible for acts taken by other masked people.

Unlawful Assembly While Masked is already a very broad charge, but adding conspiracy to it makes it downright vague and all the more dangerous for it. With this strange charge, the state is arguing that otherwise legal actions (planning a demo, something I've been involved in probably at least 80 times in Hamilton) can become illegal retroactively based on that demo being deemed unlawful later on.

I don't want to get too caught up on law though, I don't want to ask for some sort of outrage on this latest overreach by the police and the crown attorney. Of course these institutions will use any tool they have to attack anarchists and anyone who threatens the ability of the powerful to control our lives. I do however think it's important to look at the specific tools they are using to do so, in order to defend ourselves against them and to build an analysis of them that can be useful for others who might be similarly targeted. By identifying the strangeness of these charges, I don't want to create some sort of separation between "good" protestors who didn't even do anything and "bad" ones who take offensive action in the street: these conspiracy charges represent a specific threat by the state, but I would oppose any form of repression no matter what pretext it used.

The repression against anarchists in Hamilton didn't begin with the raid on our house. For a month prior, we were treated to the disgusting spectacle of coordination between business owners, the police, and the far-right in their attacks on anarchists and those who resist gentrification in the city. Following some broken windows, local businesses loudly set about proclaiming themselves victims and calling for reprisals; the same far-right and fascist groups that have been organizing anti-immigrant demonstrations in the city mobilized to support the business owners, which they did not refuse; and in the face of pressure to do something, police swept in to lay bizarre charges. There have been some good texts (one and another) circulating about this co-

in a war against gentrifying businesses, rich people, and capitalism, or are you more angry about gentrifying businesses, rich people and capitalism? Even if you think the action was foolish, don't let your response be another fucking voice in the shrill miasma of liberal nonsense. Stand by your own politics, and talk with the people close to you about your opinions. Just because people are scared, just because relationships are threatened, and just because you know someone who was affected, it doesn't mean you have to check your opinions at the door. Doesn't mean you need to distance yourself from things you held dear last week. Backing away from the radical scene now, backing away from your critiques of gentrification now – it's true cowardice. Yes, it's terrifying to speak out against the frantic current right now, when people are threatening to stab anyone who was involved; when friends and family are asking us invasive and accusatory questions; when hundreds of liberals and alt-right goons are tripping over each other to collaborate with the police (they always did make good bed-buddies); when it feels like small businesses are suddenly the most important and revered projects in the world. But you've been building a radical analysis of this world for years – I know you have enough pith in your values to withstand this flurry.

Stay solid. Don't get wrapped up in the sentimentality. Speak your mind. And for fuck's sake stop snitching. Talking to the police, insinuating to your friends or on social media that you know who did this, asking people to step forward, all of that is completely inexcusable behaviour that risks getting people thrown in jail for years. Remember jail? Remember that system of colonial repression that needs to be abolished entirely before any of us can be free? Right. That's where people are going if you keep fucking talking. Are you really feeling that protective over those businesses and luxury cars, or are you just wrapped up in some toxic momentum? Next week the headlines will dissipate, the tides of social media righteousness will turn, and those of us who have been resisting systems of domination will continue to do so in solidarity with each other.

This world is literally on fire with people furious about the pyramid scheme of capitalism – did you think you were immune from those flames?

## Staying Solid

For the lefties and radicals who've been running their mouths on social media: Do you remember who you were last week? I do. I remember you sharing that meme about how "The First Gay Pride Was A Riot". I remember you glorifying uprisings all over the world. I remember you repping your "Riots not Diets" patches. I remember you swept up in drunken ecstasy at the radical hip hop show, chanting along to lyrics about fighting against capitalism, letting all of that hard hitting truth flow through your body and dissipate into a hungover burp the next morning. So what happened? Did it feel good to front a little political anger, to rep a little radical aesthetic? And now that the liberal peace of your corner coffee shop got ruptured you're squealing all over facebook? Now that you know someone who owns a business that got smashed up you're queasy about the idea of radically confronting capital? The truth is that an overwhelming majority of people who rep radical politics in some part of their life don't actually stand for anything. They stand for edginess, righteousness, and for publicly absolving the guilt of privilege (white, middle-class, able-bodied, male, etc.). They venture forays into exhilarating forms of resistance, rarely put their bodies on the line, and almost never do anything that might actually threaten their long-term comfort, privilege, and stability. And in a way that's okay. I'm glad to see who those people are right now. But I also know that's not all of you.

Let me say this clearly: I think it's okay if you don't condone the tactics used on Aberdeen and Locke street that night. If you think it was pointless, unstrategic, or misdirected that's fine. Let's talk about that (in secure and respectful ways). But don't let yourself be someone who dissolves like a sugar cube in a warm glass of liberal sentimentality over a small riot in a rich neighborhood. Step back from the newspapers, step back from social media, step back from your own community for a second if you have to, and ask yourself: where do you want to set your stakes in this kind of moment? Are you more angry about a group of masked people who made a significant escalation

ordination between business, fash, and cops in order to defend a certain vision of the city in which the property of the wealthy is the most important thing: here's to more good conversation in the months and years ahead.

I ended up spending about 40 days in the Barton Jail because I was denied bail – my experience in this is extraordinary only in that I later was released. About 2/3 of people locked up in Ontario are in awaiting trial (which takes at least a year), and this includes almost everyone in the Barton Jail, since people are transferred to other facilities upon conviction. Prisoners inside Barton followed the recent inquest into the many deaths there closely, reacting to stories about people they knew and sharing the sadness of the families testifying. Viewed from inside the walls, the assumptions and conclusions of the inquest make it hopelessly flawed, since it ignores one fundamental truth: people who die in jail die because they are in jail.

The physical cause of death might be a drug overdose, but we can't focus simply on the presence of drugs and ignore that three people are locked in cages built for one, stripped of their dignity and any sense of safety. How can we separate drugs from despair and trauma, from the fact that in order to attend court we are repeatedly sexually assaulted by guards (they call them strip searches). And the answer the guards give to these deaths is to demand more power over prisoners' bodies, so now in addition to two strip searches and a pat-down, we also get our pelvises x-rayed and are subjected to a range of other body scanners.

These acts are violent and intensely violating, contributing to depression and acting as a real disincentive to attending court and participating in your own defense while doing almost nothing to prevent deaths. That these forms of violence are so banal among guards shouldn't cause the rest of us to accept them as just the way it needs to be in the name of "justice". How can we separate drug use from all the violence in the Barton Jail that doesn't result in death? As if the horrible things that it does to people that don't cause a heart to stop can just be ignored...

Prison creates far more problems than it solves and we'd be better off without it. Against prison and the world that needs it and solidarity to all prisoners, especially those in Barton.

Justice moves slow and it will probably be well over a year before the state actually has to present its arguments. In the meantime, I'm on house arrest, banished from Hamilton and from "attending or organizing any protests or rallies". But nothing stops and nothing changes, all of our shared struggles and priorities still continue. I'm so grateful to all of those who know that in the face of repression, safety comes not by stepping back, but by stepping up – solidarity, having each others' backs, continuing to organize and argue your ideas, keeping projects going, and finding ways to push things forward.

I want to express my solidarity with all the remaining J20 defendants, charged for their actions opposing the Trump inauguration and the institution of the presidency. The trial of four defendants is ongoing now and two more trials are starting in the coming weeks. Whether they're accused of planning the demonstration, participating in it, or of specific acts in the street, they are all deserving of our support and solidarity

Solidarity as well with all those in the French territory defending the ZAD of Notre-Dame-Des Landes as a space free of authority and with the anarchists arrested in March in Limoges and Ambert. A thought as well for Krem and for the others held near Paris in the same case.

It's also almost June 11, day of solidarity with long-term anarchist prisoners. Check out <https://june11.noblogs.org> for a list of prisoners and to find an event near you.

Since I don't believe that ideas or actions need a recognizable name on them to have value, I won't be releasing other statements unless something changes, though updates about this case and others in the region are available at <https://hamiltonanarchistsupport.noblogs.org/>

Until we're all free,  
-cedar

Remember how it felt when your window got smashed? That's how it feels for us when a rich business opens up on our block. It's an attack. A window getting smashed is aggressive, the movement of capital is violent.

The world you are creating with your businesses may feel pleasant to you, it may create spaces that feel lovely and safe and eco to you, it may feel like part of some collective attempt to make the world a little bit better. To me and many others it is the opposite. Locke street is a nightmare. I want to fight against a world where that kind of bubbleland is possible. Where people can daily ignore their mountains of privilege while patting themselves on the back for all the hard work they put into their hustles. Because right across town are people hustling twice as hard and getting nowhere. Because right across town your friends and your money are helping to remake other neighbourhood in the image of this one. Your friendly, progressive bubble is exclusive, exploitative, and viral.

And if you came from a poor background, fuck you even more. Because there is nothing admirable about climbing the economic ladder and joining the apathetic upper classes. Under capitalism your upward mobility always comes at the expense of someone else. Always.

I have no doubt that it's hurtful and scary and infuriating to have something that you poured a lot of time and energy into destroyed. Your car or your house or your business. I know some of you and I don't think you're all awful people. You're just standing on the wrong side of a line. If you had any integrity or meaningful convictions you would use the attention brought on you this week to talk about your privilege, to talk about exploitation and poverty, to talk about capitalism, to talk about how revealing it is that people are willing to risk their lives to smash your bubble of comfort. Your sentimentality is garbage, your waves of solidarity from other rich and middle-class folks are nauseating, and your cries of surprise and confusion are laughable. If you're surprised that people are angry about affluence, about gentrification, about businesses (big and small) that offer delicious organic treats to rich people while the rest of us wait in line at food basics for pesticide smothered produce, you're not paying attention.



Opening a small business is a hustle that inevitably perpetuates capitalism, and businesses geared specifically towards people with a lot of money (essentially every business on Locke Street) are actively shaping landscapes to be more accessible to rich people and less accessible to poor people. Gentrification is a word to describe class war – the endless movement of wealth in ways that rearrange spaces for rich people at the expense of poor people. Poor people are displaced, policed, pushed into more and more toxic environments, imprisoned, and forgotten. They are occasionally talked about by politicians looking to cash in on some of that sweet liberal sentimentality, but it never amounts to more than a few bed-bug infested low-income units and a photo-op.

People in Kirkendall and other privileged, middle-and-upper class neighborhoods in Hamilton never have to see the violent impacts of gentrification. They never have to feel the precarity, the fatigue, the terror, the frustration, the illnesses, and the despondency. They eat \$5 cupcakes and read articles written by other affluent people about revitalization.

It's not that anyone likes areas to remain poor. It's not that we like derelict buildings or shitty fast food. It's that moving wealth into a neighbourhood only attracts more rich people, it doesn't fundamentally change the conditions of the people who live there. Because capitalism isn't designed to float all boats, it mostly just becomes a process of shuffling poor people around based on the whims of rich people. Don't be surprised when working class people stand their ground from time to time.

### **To Those in Kirkendall**

When people attack your businesses they are trying to pop your bubbles. Make you uncomfortable. Tell you to fuck off. Because with every cent you move around your neighborhood you are creating and recreating a capitalist world that will always have poor people and that will always enact violence upon them. When people attack places like The Heather, a truly repugnant operation, it's because that place is a Trojan horse filled with exorbitant food prices, evictions, and police.

## **Another Day, Another Broken Door**

Early Friday morning, Hamilton police raided a home associated with some of those involved with organizing The Hamilton Anarchist Bookfair. The door was kicked in, a flash grenade was thrown into the house, and a full swat team entered. With their assault rifles drawn, the swat team proceeded to pull everyone out of bed some of whom were naked, and with one exception, put everyone in handcuffs. Three people were detained and one person arrested. Cedar, a member of The Tower Collective and our cherished friend, was arrested, taken away, and currently remains in custody.

Those who weren't arrested were forced to wait outside for close to five hours, while cops "searched" the home. Similar to the fascists who attacked The Tower last month, the police thoroughly trashed the space and even messed with the bookshelves. All three floors of the house were ripped apart and many things were damaged, including a collection of framed feminist postcards that were broken into several pieces and thrown into the bathroom toilet. Police are misogynist pigs, plain and simple, without exception. A long list of items were seized, including all electronics (phones, computers, cameras, external hard-drives etc.), books, posters, zines, and a pretty random assortment of documents (academic journal articles, translated texts from a book project, hand written notes, event programs, pamphlets etc.).

In terms of the arrest, Cedar is facing conspiracy charges in relation to the so-called "Locke St. Riot". We have no desire to engage with the politics of innocence. The concept of innocence and its flipside criminality obscure more than illuminate – no one is innocent and the most "criminal" amongst us run the economy and government. Beyond that, these notions perpetuate the logic of a colonial legal system rooted in white supremacy. That said, it is worth noting that conspiracy charges are notoriously dubious and flimsy, and have a legacy of being used as a tool of political persecution. They are an act of desperation intended to cast a wide net and scare people. Such charges are \*not\* a matter of engaging in a particular activity, but rather a matter of possibly encouraging a particular activity.

The Tower is an openly anarchist project that from its inception has promoted ideals of mutual aid and solidarity, equality, and community autonomy, as well as direct action, class war, and fighting back. Our politics have always included \*both\* gardens and riots. We want to see people building beautiful alternatives of liberation, just as much as we want to see people attacking structures of domination. Nothing about this is going to change, and despite recent challenges, our project will continue to push these ideas. We still have no tears for Locke St. and we remain unapologetically supportive of the activities that took place last month. It's actions like these that can impel conversations that no one wants to have (in this case, intensifying gentrification throughout the city), and we see this as positive.

As things continue to unfold, it is important for people to remember that it is never okay to cooperate with the police – do not talk to them and do not share any information (however big or small) with them. This isn't a question of agreeing or disagreeing with particular tactics, but of refusing to take actions that help facilitate state violence and repression. Aside from discussions about Locke St., local media has been dominated by stories of police corruption, misconduct, brutality, and most recently murder. Less than a week ago, the Hamilton police shot and killed Quinn MacDougall, an unarmed nineteen-year-old who had called 911 in distress looking for help. Cops are not and will never be our allies. We gain safety and strength by sticking together and staying silent.

## What Are We Fighting For?

### Strategic Reflections on the Locke St Riot

I rarely read fiction. I regret that truth and so every few months, when I get given a book of dystopian sci-fi or imaginative history, I stumble through it halfheartedly. I know that fiction has a lot to offer in terms of expanding our realm of possibility, of inspiring creation of new worlds. Someone near and dear to me once advocated for changing my reading habits by explaining that non-fiction changes what we know but fiction changes how we think. And yet, I find myself falling back into the practical guides for non-monogamy, the exposés of political corruption, the treatises on decolonial feminism. I'm driven

and what I stand for. We all need to hustle in a capitalist system to stay alive, to keep food on the table and heat in the ducts. Some of us come to identify with those hustles, some don't. I feel really fucking sorry for the people who identify themselves so deeply with their hustles. There's so much more to this life than the ways we navigate capitalism. There's so many more interesting and urgent things to rally around and defend than broken windows in bourgeois neighbourhoods. Capitalism sucks the passion out of people and replaces it with an allegiance to a system that has been violently imposed on us.

For me meaningful passion can only exist outside of capitalism, ideally against it.

### But Small Businesses!!!

One of the things that makes me laugh the most in the social media outcry this week is the assumed universality of consumer activism as a meaningful political strategy. 20 years ago leftists became really fixated on big businesses like Starbucks and Walmart as the main enemies in the battle against neo-liberal globalization. But since then a lot of us have realized that that is a horribly shortsighted and deeply unsatisfactory set of ideas. We don't hate chain stores, we hate capitalism. We don't believe for a second that better shopping habits and local organic grocery stores are going to help us radically redefine life on this planet. Those kind of approaches are placebos and security blankets for people who want to care about the world but prioritize comfort before all else. People who really like life in bubbleland but just want it to be more wholesome and less corporate. So they shop local, eat organic, bike to work. The bubbles remain unchanged, the decor is a bit more eco.

I believe that all employers are entering into an inherently exploitative relationship with their employees. Even the most respectful, well-paying, well-intentioned employer is rendering surplus capital from those they hire. I've been a boss before. I didn't like it, but it was a good hustle. I didn't come to identify with it, and if the people who worked under me ever organized against the company, I would have jumped ship on my position immediately and joined with them. I know where I belong when it comes to social agitation – aiming anger up the pyramid, not down.

by bourgeois morality<sup>3</sup>. And it's very very comfortable in bubbleland. We've all seen those mansions on Aberdeen, we've all seen the luxury cars parked on Locke, we've all seen the cupcake boutiques: the people in that neighborhood are living decadent and comfortable lives. Whatever sob stories they're telling right now, just remember that they're living larger than the vast majority of Hamiltonians. It's not that they don't care about other people or even systems of oppression – lots of them donate to charities and advocate for living wages and compost all of their organic waste. They're just not willing to let anything disrupt the comfort of their bubbles.

I think it's fair to say that the people in Kirkendall felt deeply uncomfortable last weekend. Something unpleasant snuck into bubbleland, wrecked havoc on some material objects, terrified some bystanders, and dissipated before those stealthy hamilton pigs could restore order and comfort. Good.

### **How you came to care about a donut shop**

Did I mention I hate capitalism? I hate the way it organizes communities into efficient work forces to funnel money up the pyramid. I hate the way it alienates us from our capacities and desires and forces us to commodify our passions. Capitalism forces us to rely heavily, if not entirely, on a system that is not only killing the planet, but is pitting humans against each other and rapidly stockpiling all of the wealth and power in fewer and fewer hands. Everyday capitalism makes us serve the system that is crushing us.

Because it's so pervasive, widespread and cutthroat, capitalism has colonized nearly every aspect of our lives. Everyday I make concessions to a capitalist system, not because I want to perpetuate it, but because it has literally stamped out every other option (exterminate the buffalo, toxify the water, displace and murder every non-capitalist community, use every conceivable method of torture to subdue rebellious populations, etc.). One of the most mind boggling and heartwrenching things about capitalism is that, because it has so thoroughly colonized us, it can cause an otherwise smart and creative human being to identify deeply with a silly business plan. That doughnut shop becomes more than just a way to survive in capitalism, it becomes who i am

by the internal desire to dismantle systems of dominance and hierarchy. If I can learn enough about them, maybe I'll be better equipped to aid in their destruction. Theory to practice to theory to practice.

Of course, I don't have to choose between fiction or non-fiction. I can let my tastes and desires ambulate between the two genres. Perhaps one day, when the problems of the world feel less urgent, I'll gravitate towards the creative potential of fiction. But for me, right now, things do feel immediate. And grave. And aggressive. I feel as though there are battles to be fought on all fronts and me and my comrades are standing back-to-back in a circle with swords drawn. To those who say this rhetoric is alarmist, I say you're not paying close enough attention. Or maybe living too much inside your bubble.

My politics mean a lot to me. I take them very seriously. A casual friend date with me nearly always involves discussions of autonomy or gentrification or land reclamation. I most often have weeks where I have more organizing meetings than alone time. I won't partner with someone who doesn't share my principles, primarily because I need to be able to confide in them and lean on them during the inevitable periods of my life where state repression will play a role. I live and breathe my convictions.

But my beliefs aren't a static set of ideas, they're a dynamic and beautiful tapestry of truths that evolve with the introduction of new information and experiences. The only constant in this world is change, and that's a good thing. I want this world to change. While sometimes victory shared alongside friends shifts my politics by figuring out what works, I'm more often changed by failure – figuring out what doesn't. The root of transformation is conflict. Friendships become stronger when arguments are resolved and commitment to the relationship is confirmed time and time again. We have a name for those shallow relations who only stick with us through the good times – fair-weather friends.

We have a tendency as people to shy away from what feels uncomfortable and lean into what feels nice. There is nothing wrong with this inclination and I believe we are well served by listening to our intuition. The problem arises

when these sensations are then attributed a moral value. Happiness and harmony and calm are seen as “good” things and sadness and anger and discord are seen as “bad”, instead of simply two sides of a coin. There is no way to understand joy without despair. There is no way to know peace without conflict. Hurricanes serve a valuable purpose for the sea. Forest fires are very good news to blueberries, but less so to squirrels. It’s important to remember that creation often necessitates destruction.

I do not believe that we can build a society within capitalism that rejects hierarchy and oppression, or that said society would someday grow to naturally overtake the state resulting in an anarchist utopia. My visions of the future necessitate destruction of the current order. When I raise my fist at cries of smashing the state, I literally mean as much. Sometimes that destruction looks like taking down ideas, sometimes it looks more like taking down buildings. The world is going to change whether we like it or not, the only control we have is in shifting it’s direction. I am not afraid of a drastically different world or the transition and I’ll spend my life trying to convince others to embrace the unknown in the same way. It’s going to be okay, we’re in this together.

So along we go as organizers, as anarchists, as friends, traversing the tricky terrain of putting thought into action. And then something happens. Specifically, the Locke St Riot. But we can speak about this in more general terms as well. This isn’t the first time tactics and strategy have sown division in our circles, and – we can hope – it won’t be the last. I understand the reaction from the business class in Hamilton, and I understand the reaction of my fellow anarchists to the bloodthirsty and immediate embrace of mob violence. It’s okay to be afraid. It’s okay to seek safety. But it’s not okay to write off the action as bad, or the principles behind the action as bad, because you associate your feelings of fear and discomfort and confusion as bad. I’m not writing this to ask you to accept what happened uncritically as a show of solidarity. I’m writing this to implore you to step into the confusion as an opportunity to clarify and grow your own politics.

There are infinitely interesting and important questions that arise in the wake of the Locke St Riot. Feelings of discomfort are valuable tools in assessing where

in Hamilton. In some ways it can feel nourishing and comfortable.

One of the things that really challenges me about the riot last weekend is the extent to which it’s fractured a lot of those relationships. People know my politics, and know I have some association with the anarchist scene in Hamilton, and already I can feel the chill. I’ve had three interactions with people since Saturday who suddenly didn’t want to say hi, didn’t want to share a moment of warmth with me. They’re too upset with anarchists. They need someone to blame so they’re blaming everyone they can link to that word. It’s absolutely juvenile.

So yes, it hurts to think that my wider social fabric in this city has been tattered a bit. It feels less comfortable here. But here’s the thing about radical politics, the kind of politics that seeks to fundamentally change the way human beings organize themselves: It’s never comfortable. And that’s what the riot in Kirkendall is about for me.

It’s about making people uncomfortable. It’s about bursting a bubble.

### **The Value of Discomfort**

Let’s talk about bubbles. The majority of North Americans live in a bubble of privilege; Generally speaking, the global north amasses its privilege on the exploitation of the global south. We benefit but we don’t have to see what happens on the other side. Settlers in North America live in a bubble of privilege amassed through the colonization of this land and the displacement, enslavement, and murder of Indigenous peoples. We continue to benefit from colonization, but we’re not often made to see the historical or ongoing impacts of it. White people live in a bubble of privilege amassed on the enslavement, exploitation and incarceration of brown and black people. Onwards and onwards.

Until we get to a neighbourhood like Kirkendall. Most of the people in Kirkendall live in a dense cluster of bubbles. A complicated and overwhelming mandala of unearned privileges<sup>2</sup>, colored with apathy and framed on all sides

face-to-face interactions have mostly been filled with nuance, emotional vulnerability, and politically interesting conversations, I've found little but malignant nonsense online. I've had moments of feeling literally sickened by things I'm reading. People in this city are showing their true stripes, and it's not pretty.

### **Tattered Relationships**

I am an anarchist born and raised in Hamilton. By anarchist, I don't mean someone who sits behind my computer and occasionally makes broad proclamations about politics, I mean I spend a lot of my time acting and organizing against all forms of unconsensual hierarchy, domination, and most passionately, against the pillaging and destruction of this planet. I despise with every fibre of my being the ecocidal, patriarchal, white-supremacist, capitalist system that has imposed itself on this world, and that has subsumed so many aspects of our lives. I fight against the tendrils of that world wherever I can find them.

I also spend a lot of time trying to nurture and build something different. Trying to build community around radical ideas (ones that address the root of the problems), to model those ideas in our relationships, in our organizing spaces, and in our various projects. But those kind of constructive projects have limits, because in truth the only way for us to meaningfully do any of those things is to resist and ultimately destroy the systems that dominate us. They've got police and militaries and extensive propaganda networks and jails and judges all designed to make sure that nothing different emerges. We can't just build new worlds. We need to destroy the systems that prevent other worlds from existing.

I am also a part of the broader Hamilton community. Maybe I've served you a bottle of Export at a local bar/venue, maybe I've taken care of your disabled uncle, maybe we regularly chat while I buy apples from you at the farmers market or maybe I even sold you organic produce once when I was working on a farm. I have a thousand "community pals" in this city, people I say hi to and share a general sense of warmth and camaraderie with. I like that about living

we feel unclear or inconsistent in our political analysis. They help us to identify what questions we need to be asking ourselves. Am I truly willing to see the property of the wealthy seized or destroyed? To what extent do I actually support the destruction of Canadian society? How much of my own comfort am I willing to sacrifice in pursuit of a new social order? And maybe most importantly, am I prepared to accept violence as part of the revolution?

Because what happened on Locke St shouldn't be reduced to simple property destruction. There were people eating in those restaurants and sitting in cars and those people were afraid. While there was no threat to their personal safety, they also had no way of knowing that. These are concepts that I wrestled with in the days and weeks after the riot. I came to the conclusion that I was okay with a moment of social disorder that caused some people to feel afraid. To the larger questions, posed above, the answers would read: yes, totally, most, and yes. My politics do not condemn violence as universally bad, as never the answer. My politics see the rich being afraid as inevitable.

These are unpopular answers with a large segment of Hamiltonians. Living a politic that sees as much value in destruction as creation is a difficult position. And at some point putting those politics into action is going to lose us the favour of huge swaths of the population. Not everyone in this world stands to gain from a future free from oppression. Redistribution means taking from the rich, not waiting for them to give it up willingly. Direct action means doing it ourselves.

And before you get ahead of me, I'm not trying to say that everyone needs to mask up and loot Locke St or lock down to a bulldozer. All revolutionary work is important, including that which remains behind the headlines. I am, however, saying that we need to remain committed to our politics and to each other even in times of great turmoil. Especially in times of great turmoil. That means not jumping ship as soon as liberals pick up pitchforks. It means not throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It means defending our spaces and our ideas.

What happened on Locke St wasn't perfect. It wasn't some glorious moment of revolution. It was messy and provocative and emotive. It was human. And it

wasn't about creating a new world in the same way that the majority of our organizing is. It was about the urge to destroy that which oppresses us, to fight back, to defend against the gentrifying onslaught on our neighborhoods. It was about creating space. Because that is the role that destruction plays in creation. It creates space for new ideas and conversations, and sometimes new buildings, new societies, new life. It is possible to defend destruction in its own rite. But I would argue that it is easier in the context of protracted struggle. As someone who is committed to lifelong anarchism, I see moments of destruction as necessary to make room for the project of creative growth. I can even see them as beautiful.

But maybe underneath it all, what happened on Locke St makes you uncomfortable because you see the downfall of capitalism as a lofty aspiration and not a real goal. Perhaps you realize, on some level, that you would be satisfied with more equitable treatment and access under the current system. That what you are really fighting for is a bigger piece of the pie. I argue that those are feelings you have a political responsibility to explore. If you decide that your unease with the riot was grounded in a belief in pacifism, then argue it. But maybe you realize that you're just a little scared. Scared of coming to terms with what your politics really mean. Scared that living your beliefs will inevitably lead to the loss of your security. It's okay to be scared. Fear can cause us to freeze and it can cause us to run, but it can also cause us to fight. And that is what I'm asking for. Don't pontificate on social media, don't denounce The Tower, don't try to force anarchism into a pacifist box – step into the struggle and hold your friends tight. Talk about tactics. Sharpen your politics. Prepare yourself for what comes next.

A recent article in the local news ended with flimsy conjecture about the meaning of the flaming, crumbling tower that acts as the symbol of our local anarchist social center. With just a bit of digging, the author could have discerned that it was a reference to The Tower tarot card. A card that represents upheaval.

The flaming tower embodies a moment of reckoning for an order built on false pretenses. It represents a revolutionary moment that clears the way for

something new to rise from the ashes of the old. It is conflict embodied. It is something we should all embrace. For the problem isn't the existence of conflict, but our inability to process it in a healthy and constructive way. Moving through conflict together is what builds trust. It's what builds communities. On the other side of conflict is connection, commitment, and courage. I'm going to keep fighting because it's what I believe we need right now. We need to make space. But know that I hope to live to see the day where the need for destruction has passed, where the oppressive systems which keep us down and divided have been dismantled, where we have space to create new worlds. I hope you're standing next to me. I hope to imagine fantastical utopias and see them as possibilities. I hope to read fiction.

## **Staying Solid Through The Flurry: An Anarchist Perspective on the Kirkendall Riot**

I wasn't there on Aberdeen or Locke that night. I don't know who was, and I'm not interested in knowing who was. I don't necessarily think it was the most strategic or timely action in Hamilton's history of resistance, but I certainly don't condemn it. Far from it. I think it was brave, I think it was well-executed, and I think it was a meaningful and justified act of political action against a neighbourhood that sits way too comfortably on a mountain of unearned privileges, and that flamboyantly basks in the luxuries afforded by a destructive and exploitative system.

What happened on Saturday night in the Kirkendall neighborhood was both complicated and beautiful.

That riot (1) on Saturday has caused an absolute frenzy of activity in Hamilton, from face-to-face conversations to social media outbursts to organized acts of solidarity to a truly mobbish lust for punishment and retribution. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are being invested in a police operation to catch the people who did it. The tower has been attacked three times in as many days. I have spent countless hours on social media, read every article in every media outlet, and talked with dozens of people about it. The profound failures of emotion, of reason, and of basic journalism in this town have been stunning. While my